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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of student teachers concerning student teaching and to examine their perceptions of the adequacy of their college course work. Subjects for the study were 137 student teachers from five universities. Respondents to the questionnaire used in this research were asked to evaluate problems in the areas of personal adjustment, discipline, work adjustment, and materials-related problems. They were also asked to indicate how well they thought their college training was preparing them to meet these problems. Items of greatest difficulty were dealing with student discipline, finding too little time for individual instruction, and coping with student inability to follow directions. College training appeared to be weakest in preparing student teachers for financial difficulty involved in student teaching, handling racial problems in the classroom, and dealing with discipline problems. (JD)

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# STUDENT TEACHERS IN THREE STATES LOOK AT THEIR PROBLEMS AND PREPARATION

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STUDENT TEACHERS IN THREE STATES
LOOK AT THEIR PROBLEMS AND PREPARATION

## A TRI-STATE SURVEY OF STUDENT TEACHERS

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major functions of faculty members who work with student teachers is to keep abreast of the problems which student teachers experience during their time of student teaching. Another item of concern to supervisors is to know how well student teachers have been prepared to meet the problems which will be encountered. Prior to the present series of studies concerning perceptions of these problems by student teachers, very few comprehensive studies of the training needs and problems of student teachers had been undertaken.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to: (1) determine perceptions of elementary and secondary student teachers concerning

major problems encountered during student teaching, and (2) examine responses of student teachers concerning perceptions of the adequacy of preparation gained during college course work to meet problems successfully.

PROCEDURES

Subjects for the study were 137 student teachers who were currently student teaching at Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University, University of Wisconsin, Ball State University, and Indiana State University. The population included student teachers form rural and urban centers; both male and female; white and non-white; and elementary, junior high and secondary levels of teaching.

A questionnaire devised by the researchers of this study as a result of open-ended interviews with a previous group of student teachers was administered to the participating student teachers. The original questionnaire used in the prior study (Seiferth and Purcell, 1977) had included 80 problems to which the student teachers recorded on a Likert scale their evaluation of the level of difficulty of each problem. They also recorded their judgment of the preparation received in previous course work in college to meet the same problems. A revised questionnaire was prepared which contained 40 statements. The 40 statements were divided into 4 subscales of 10 statements each, and items were presented in random order. The four measures or subtests included: (1) Personal Adjustment, (2) Discipline, (3) Work Adjustment, and (4) Materials-related problems.

The questionnaires were sent to representative faculty members at each of the five institutions involved in the study where they were administered to student teachers in the fall of 1978.

FINDINGS

Data were gathered describing a number of characteristics of each student teaching situation. These included: (1) the sex of the student teacher; (2) the subject matter area in which the student taught; (3) population of the community in which the teaching was done; (4) proximity in miles from the school to home of the student teacher; (5) enrollment in the school building in which the student teacher was teaching. This information is shown in Tables I through IV.

The questionnaire results were analyzed to determine the mean scores obtained by the student teachers on all four of the subscales according to each area of the demographic data, namely, area of concentration, size of community, miles from home, enrollment in building and level of student teaching, plus the means of the total scores. Means for the entire population are also given for comparison of the scores. No significant differences were found among the various groups via one-way analysis of variance except in responses to materials-related problems and the total scores of the Table of Area of Concentration.

Identical procedures were followed in analyzing results of scores obtained from the second section of the questionnaire in which student teachers ranked their perceptions of previous college preparation to meet problems encountered during student teaching. A larger number of statistically significant F-ratios were found in the second part of the survey than on the first.

When classified by Level of Student Teaching, significant differences were found in assessment of training for all measures of perceived preparation, i.e., Personal Adjustment, Discipline, Work Adjustment, Materials and the Total scores. The results were also statistically significant on Materials and the Total scores when classified by Population of the Community. As on the first section of the survey, there were more significant differences found between the universities than any other classification measure. Differences were found in the measures of preparation in Personal Adjustment, Discipline, Materials and the Total scores. All means scores appear in Tables V through XIV .

Finally, data were examined to determine which problems had loomed as being the most difficult for the student teachers. Likewise, the items for which student teachers felt least prepared were listed. These are shown below.

ITEMS OF GREATEST DIFFICULTY

1. Dealing with student discipline problems
2. Finding too little time for individual instruction
3. Coping with student inability to follow directions

ITEMS OF LEAST PREPARATION

1. Financial difficulty such as having to give up a job to

student teach

2. Handling racial problems in the classroom

3. Dealing with student discipline problems

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that student teachers representing six institutions that are training future teachers have significant differences on all four measures of problems used and in training to meet such problems. However, the three highest marked items in each measure, problems and training, received consistently similar ratings from students in all the institutions.

These findings signal the need for personnel in teacher training institutions to become more aware of the problems perceived as major by student teachers. Professors of education need to address themselves to providing additional information to neophyte teachers to the actual problems encountered during student teaching.

Additionally, the enhancement of successful student teaching experiences should be comprised of significant training of the students to meet problems which will be faced during student teaching. The direct impact of such prior instruction would be invaluable to student teachers.

While the trends identified in this study are very strong, it is important that they be further examined by means of a replication of the study involving a larger population.

Table I

Distribution of Student Teachers
by Level of Teaching

| Level of Student Teaching | N | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 56 | 41.5 |
| Elementary/Spec. Ed. | 10 | 7.4 |
| Secondary/Spec. Ed. | 9 | 6.7 |
| Junior High | 17 | 12.6 |
| Secondary | 43 | 31.9 |
| Total | 135 | 100.0 |

Table II

Distribution of Student Teachers
by Enrollment

| Building Enrollment | N | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 100-200 | 10 | 7.4 |
| 201-400 | 52 | 38.5 |
| 401-600 | 32 | 23.7 |
| Over 600 | 41 | 30.4 |
| Total | 135 | 100.0 |

Table III

Distribution of Student Teachers
by Proximity to Permanent Residence

| Miles From Residence | N | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0-100 | 115 | 85.2 |
| 101-300 | 10 | 7.4 |
| 301-500 | 3 | 2.2 |
| Over 500 | 7 | 5.1 |
| Total | 135 | 99.9 |

Table IV

Distribution of Student Teachers
by Population of Community

| Population of Community | N | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1,000-5,000 | 26 | 19.3 |
| 5,001-10,000 | 20 | 14.8 |
| 10,001-15,000 | 23 | 17.0 |
| Over 15,000 | 66 | 48.9 |
| Total | 135 | 100.0 |

Table V

Mean Scores for Part 1 - Problems of Student Teachers According to Level of Student Teaching

| Level of Student Teacher | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 41.1 | 40.2 | 41.8 | 42.7 | 165.8 |
| El/Spec. Ed. | 39.5 | 39.4 | 39.2 | 42.0 | 160.0 |
| Sec./Spec. Ed. | 40.1 | 37.4 | 42.2 | 42.4 | 162.2 |
| Junior High | 43.9 | 41.6 | 43.7 | 45.1 | 174.4 |
| Secondary | 40.9 | 38.3 | 42.3 | 42.2 | 163.8 |
| Entire Sample | 42.2 | 39.5 | 42.1 | 42.8 | 165.6 |

Table VI

Mean Scores for Part 1 - Problems of Student Teachers According to Miles from Residence

| Miles from Residence | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-100 | 41.5 | 39.5 | 42.2 | 43.2 | 166.4 |
| 101-300 | 40.4 | 38.3 | 42.0 | 40.0 | 160.5 |
| 301-500 | 39.3 | 39.6 | 41.7 | 42.0 | 162.7 |
| Over 500 | 36.7 | 39.0 | 39.7 | 39.3 | 154.7 |
| Entire Sample | 41.2 | 39.5 | 42.1 | 42.8 | 165.6 |

Table VII

Mean Scores for Part 1 - Problems of Student Teachers According to Building Enrollment

| Enrollment in Building | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100-200 | 44.0 | 43.3 | 44.8 | 43.5 | 175.6 |
| 201-400 | 40.4 | 39.2 | 41.2 | 43.1 | 164.0 |
| 401-600 | 41.3 | 39.9 | 42.6 | 42.4 | 166.3 |
| Over 600 | 41.4 | 38.7 | 42.0 | 42.4 | 164.5 |
| Entire Sample | 41.2 | 39.5 | 42.1 | 42.8 | 165.6 |

Table VIII

Mean Scores for Part 1 - Problems of Student Teachers According to Community Population

| Population | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1,000-5,000 | 42.2 | 40.9 | 43.5 | 44.8 | 171.5 |
| 5,001-10,000 | 42.3 | 39.7 | 42.2 | 42.4 | 165.6 |
| 10,001-15,000 | 39.6 | 37.2 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 159.6 |
| Over 15,000 | 41.0 | 39.7 | 42.0 | 43.0 | 165.3 |
| Entire Sample | 41.2 | 39.5 | 42.1 | 42.8 | 165.6 |

Table IX

Mean Scores for Part 2 - Training to Meet Problems
According to Level of Student Teaching

| Level of Student Teaching | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 25.4 | 27.7 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 102.6 |
| El/Spec. Ed. | 23.0 | 23.8 | 23.4 | 24.0 | 93.8 |
| Sec/Spec. Ed. | 29.2 | 29.9 | 27.0 | 29.8 | 115.7 |
| Jr. High | 19.8 | 22.2 | 19.1 | 20.0 | 81.1 |
| Secondary | 26.1 | 29.7 | 26.0 | 27.0 | 108.5 |
| Entire Sample | 25.0 | 27.5 | 24.2 | 25.2 | 102.0 |
| | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.02 |

*Statistical Significance

Table X

Mean Scores for Part 2 - Training to Meet Problems
According to Miles from Residence

| Miles from Residence | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-100 | 25.0 | 27.3 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 101.1 |
| 101-300 | 27.0 | 31.0 | 27.0 | 28.0 | 112.0 |
| 301-500 | 25.3 | 27.7 | 23.7 | 24.7 | 101.3 |
| Over 500 | 24.3 | 27.0 | 27.0 | 27.7 | 105.7 |
| Entire Sample | 25.0 | 27.5 | 24.3 | 25.2 | 102.0 |

*Test of statistical significance of F-Ratio, one way analysis of variance.

Table XI

Mean Scores for Part 2 - Training to Meet Problems According to Building Enrollment

| rollment in ilding | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-200 | 25.9 | 27.3 | 24.0 | 28.0 | 105.0 |
| 1-400 | 25.4 | 27.5 | 24.4 | 24.6 | 101.8 |
| 1-600 | 26.8 | 29.0 | 26.6 | 26.8 | 109.0 |
| er 600 | 23.0 | 26.4 | 22.3 | 24.2 | 96.0 |
| tire Sample | 25.0 | 27.5 | 24.2 | 25.2 | 102.0 |

Table XII

Mean Scores for Part 2 - Training to Meet Problems According to Community Population

| pulation | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 000-5,000 | 24.2 | 26.9 | 24.0 | 23.0 | 98.1 |
| 001-10,000 | 21.1 | 24.0 | 20.8 | 22.1 | 88.0 |
| ,001-15,000 | 27.7 | 29.2 | 25.2 | 28.2 | 110.3 |
| er 15,000 | 25.6 | 28.2 | 25.0 | 26.1 | 104.9 |
| tire Sample | 25.0 | 27.5 | 24.2 | 25.2 | 102.0 |
| tatistical Significance | | | | 0.04 | |

est of statistical significance of F-Ratio, one way analysis of variance.

Table XIII

Mean Scores for Part 2 - Problems of Student Teachers According to Institution

| University | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Work Adjustment | Materials | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northern Ill. University | 39.1 | 38.2 | 40.3 | 42.2 | 159.9 |
| U. of Wis. | 42.4 | 41.0 | 43.3 | 44.3 | 171.0 |
| Ind. St./El | 41.7 | 41.0 | 42.2 | 43.2 | 168.0 |
| Ball State Univ. | 45.7 | 45.3 | 46.1 | 47.4 | 184.7 |
| SIU-C | 39.5 | 37.1 | 41.8 | 40.2 | 158.8 |
| Ind. St./Sec. | 38.5 | 36.1 | 29.4 | 29.8 | 153.8 |
| Entire Sample | 40.9 | 39.3 | 41.8 | 42.5 | 164.5 |
| *Statistical Significance | .02 | .01 | .02 | .01 | .01 |

Table XIV

Mean Scores for Part 2 - Training to Meet Problems According to Institution

| University | Personal Adjustment | Discipline | Skills | Material | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DeKalb | 29.1 | 32.6 | 29.0 | 30.1 | 120.3 |
| U. of Wis. | 21.4 | 24.0 | 21.6 | 21.6 | 88.5 |
| Ind St./El | 25.1 | 27.2 | 24.5 | 24.1 | 101.0 |
| Ball St | 25.2 | 25.3 | 23.1 | 24.9 | 98.6 |
| SIU-C | 28.4 | 29.4 | 25.9 | 29.1 | 112.8 |
| Ind St/Sec | 25.6 | 29.0 | 24.7 | 26.3 | 105.6 |
| Entire Sample | 25.0 | 27.5 | 24.2 | 25.2 | 102.0 |
| *Statistical Significance | .02 | .02 | | .01 | .01 |

*Test of Statistical Significance of F-Ratio, one-way analysis of variance.